

# THE STATE PORT PILOT

Phone 910-457-4568/Fax 910-457-9427/e-mail pilot@southport.net

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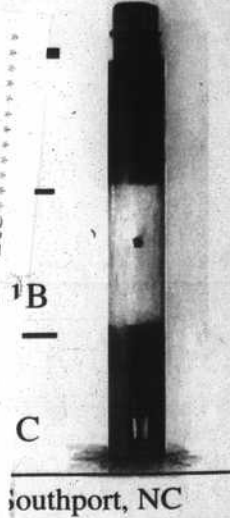
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## Economy becomes 'Grand'

By Laura Kimball  
Feature Editor

Economic activity in the four-county coastal area of Brunswick, New Hanover, Pender and Horry counties rose 13.6 percent over 1997, experts involved in the N.C./S.C. Border Conference Initiative said Friday.

The 1997 growth rate for the national economy was 3.8 percent.

The study, which is a joint project of Coastal Carolina University and UNC-Wilmington, is designed to analyze local economic conditions from late 1997 to early 1998 and to forecast the economy for the next 12 months.

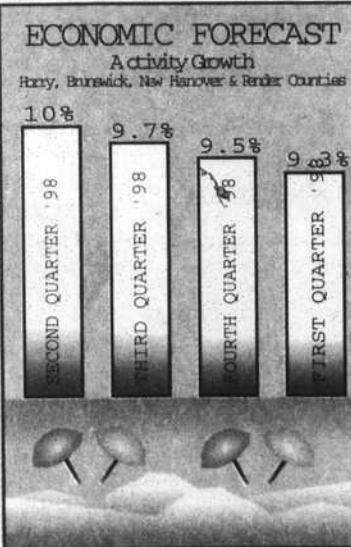
All counties included in the study are in North Carolina except for Horry County in South Carolina. The study examined employment statistics and records of retail sales in each county, but focused on the statistics of all counties combined.

"To some extent, the state boundary between North Carolina and South Carolina is arbitrary," said William Hall Jr., director of the Center for Business and Economics Services at UNC-Wilmington.

The purpose of the study is to provide guidance to public infrastructure planners or private business owners who want to know what to expect and plan for in the future, Hall said.

The economy of the four-county area is expected to maintain a high level of economic activity over the next 12 months (see graph). For example, the first quarter of 1999, which is the area's off-season, is expected to have a 9.3-percent growth rate — far above the national growth rate of 3.8 percent.

Claude Ferrell, professor of economics at UNC-Wilmington, said, "As long as people keep coming to this area, growth will continue to happen... This is the kind of growth that areas would kill for."



## BEACH BEAT



Mickey Mills and Steel inspired some backup musicians while performing at the Long Beach cabana on Saturday. Extensive activities are planned for the cabana on July 2 as part of the Fourth of July activities, and the next regular Beach Day there will be July 25.

Photo by Jim Harper

## Schools' minority hiring Continuing problem seen for county

By Laura Kimball  
Feature Editor

Concern about the small percentage of minorities teaching in Brunswick County schools was a topic of discussion at the Brunswick County Board of Education meeting Monday night.

Joyce Hewett, vice-chairman on the board, voiced concern on behalf

of the personnel committee that the county was not hiring and retaining minorities, and that something needed to be done.

"We need to do some work in the area, but we're not sure what we need to do," she said.

Hewett included African-Americans, American Indians, Hispanics and multi-racial persons in her definition of minorities. Only four

schools in the county are above the 40-percent level of minority personnel, she said.

Also, she has noticed that there is a higher percentage of minority personnel in the northern part of the county and hopes to learn what they are doing to attract and maintain them.

"I wonder how diversity is being

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## County planning Subdivision changes sign of the times

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Water has a way of making things grow -- including new houses, lots and subdivisions.

An ordinance that regulates how the county should grow, adopted in 1991, faces major overhaul because some planners are not pleased with the type development that the document allows.

A new county subdivision ordinance takes into account the rapid growth of the county and how water lines and sewer service are transforming the face of the once-rural community.

"I think the growth rate in the county is the major factor," said Jeff Coutu, Brunswick County planning director. "We're seeing a lot more of the larger developments than we did in the past. And now that we've extended public water

to that area, I think we'll see even more subdivisions." Winding River Plantation off N. C. 211 near Supply is an example of how one subdivision can spur the growth of several others. Since the development was approved and water lines were installed, several smaller subdivisions adjacent to the golf course community have gone before the planning board for

... now that we've extended public water out to rural areas, I think we'll see even more subdivisions."

Jeff Coutu  
Planning director

approval. Some Brunswick County subdivisions have become showcases while others invite clear-cutting methods and unimaginative designs that are also allowed under the same county ordinance. For the past six months, the Brunswick County Planning Board has been slowly but surely revising the ordinance to draft a final product it hopes will please developers and consumers.

"The intent is for both," said Coutu. "To come up with reasonable rules that developers can use

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## Court, agencies joining the fight against violence

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Prosecutors believe a pilot program that battles domestic violence has sent a strong message to both defendants and victims in its first year of operation.

The Family Triage Unit for Domestic Violence covers the 13th Judicial District -- Brunswick, Columbus and Bladen counties -- and has just received a \$68,494 grant from the Governor's Crime Commission for a second year. County commissioners from the three-county area match funds to keep the program alive, including \$26,000 from the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners for

fiscal year 1997-98. "I'm very proud of what we've done," said assistant district attorney Lillian Salcines, coordinator of the triage unit in Brunswick County. "I think it's made an impact on the lives of people in our community."

The 13th Judicial District was chosen for the pilot program last year, and with the funds prosecutors were able to hire a bilingual investigator, special prosecutors and two support staffpersons. District Court judges were assigned to work two special court dates each month in the county and a sheriff's detective was assigned to handle domestic violence cases exclusively.

The bulk of funds from the

See Violence, page 9

## New rec programming Southport's tax rate expected at 53 cents

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

With the exception of some additional recreation department programming, the people of Southport will get about the same from their city government in the coming year as they did this year, if aldermen adopt the budget proposal prepared by the city's budget committee.

That \$7.06-million budget proposal will be the subject of public hearing to be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 18, at City Hall. The board of aldermen will be free to adopt a budget -- as proposed, or as amended -- at any time after the conclusion of that public hear-

ing, but before midnight June 30. The proposal the budget committee advances leaves the city's property tax rate at 53 cents per \$100 valuation. With an estimated tax base of \$117.7 million -- \$8 million more than last year -- the property tax is expected to generate \$589,000, about 53,000 more than last year and about 32 percent of the proposed \$1.83-million general fund.

This year's general fund budget, if adopted substantially as proposed, will be about eight percent larger than last year, but about four percent of that increase is attributable to the transfer of solid waste employees' salaries from an enterprise fund to the

See Tax rate, page 7

## Building bids okay with city

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

It now appears possible that ground may be broken for replacement of the Southport Community Building sometime shortly after this year's N. C. Fourth of July Festival.

That's ambitious, but possible. "There are some things that have to fall into place, but my hope is we'll be prepared to go to construction in 30 days," said Ken Mabe, who since 1995 has spearheaded the drive to replace the burned Southport Community Building next to Fort

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